



7910 Woodmont Avenue • Suite 700 • Bethesda, Maryland 20814-3015
301-654-2055 • Fax 301-654-5920 • member@gastro.org

PRESIDENT

Martin Brotman, MD
California Pacific Medical Center
2333 Buchanan Street, Suite P1200
San Francisco, CA 94115-1995
415-600-3575
FAX: 415-600-3679
brotman@sutterhealth.org

NATIONAL OFFICE
Executive Vice President
Robert B. Greenberg

American Gastroenterological Association Statement on
OTC Availability of Proton Pump Inhibitors

PRESIDENT ELECT

Daniel K. Podolsky, MD
617-726-7411
FAX: 617-724-2136
podolsky.daniel@mgh.harvard.edu

VICE PRESIDENT

Emmet B. Keefe, MD
650-498-5691
FAX: 650-498-5692
ekeefe@stanford.edu

SECRETARY

Joanne A.P. Wilson, MD
919-684-1817
FAX: 919-681-8729
joanne.wilson@duke.edu

SECRETARY ELECT

C. Mel Wilcox, MD
205-975-4958
FAX: 205-934-1546
melw@uab.edu

TREASURER

Ian L. Taylor, MD, PhD
504-584-1783
FAX: 504-584-2945
ian.taylor@tulane.edu

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Heartburn is an extremely common problem, affecting approximately 60 million Americans. For many heartburn sufferers, life-style changes and over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medications are effective treatments for occasional heartburn. Approximately 25 million people have frequent heartburn. However, no OTC product is currently approved for the prevention of frequent heartburn.

Because prescription proton pump inhibitors have been shown to be safe and effective for preventing frequent heartburn, the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) believes that it is appropriate for FDA to consider if these medications should be made available to consumers without a doctor's prescription.

If the FDA determines that the evidence supports a change in the prescription-only status of proton pump inhibitors, AGA would support that decision with this contingency: all product labeling and promotion of these products must make it clear to consumers when it is necessary to consult a physician with expertise in digestive diseases.

The AGA

Founded in 1897, the AGA is one of the oldest medical specialty societies in the United States. Our members include physicians and scientists who research, diagnose and treat disorders of the gastrointestinal tract and liver. Representing nearly 13,000 gastroenterologists worldwide, the AGA serves as an advocate for its members and their patients, supports gastroenterology practice and scientific needs, and promotes the discovery, dissemination and application of new knowledge, leading to the prevention, treatment and cure of digestive and liver diseases.

Contact: Kay Twomey @ 301-941-2687.

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